

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2011 Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery News Release 3

Commercial and Subsistence Fishery Management Strategy

This is an announcement from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at Bethel for salmon fishermen in the Kuskokwim Management Area.

2011 KUSKOKWIM RIVER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

State and federal fishery management staff will follow the guidelines outlined in the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan **5 ACC 07.365**, to the extent possible, to achieve escapement goals, provide for subsistence use, and allow commercial fishing on available harvestable surpluses.

Subsistence Fishery

Subsistence fishing will be open (except for the areas described below) 7 days per week with the exception of closures 6 hours before, during, and 3 hours after each commercial fishing period, **unless superseded by Emergency Order**. In District 1, when one subdistrict is open to commercial fishing, subsistence fishing will be allowed in the majority of the other subdistrict. During closed periods, subsistence fishing for species other than salmon will be allowed with gillnets of 4-inch or less mesh not to exceed 60-feet in length.

Subsistence hook and line fishing for any species of salmon will be allowed 7 days per week (except for the areas described below), **unless superseded by Emergency Order**. Bag and possession limits for Aniak River upstream of Doestock Creek are 10 fish per day. Of those fish, the daily

bag and possession limit for salmon is 3, of which 2 can be Chinook salmon 20 inches or greater in length.

Subsistence Fishery Restrictions: Emergency Order No. 3-S-WR-01-11

This Emergency Order restricts subsistence salmon fishing in the following waters of the Kuskokwim River Drainage effective 12:01 a.m., Wednesday, June 1, 2011 until 11:59 p.m., Monday, July 25, 2011 unless superseded by a subsequent Emergency Order.

Subsistence Chinook salmon fishing with hook and line gear is closed and subsistence fishing is restricted to the use of gillnets with 4-inch or less mesh not to exceed 60-feet in length in the following waters of the Kuskokwim River Drainage.

- Kuskokuak Slough between ADF&G regulatory markers located at the upstream and downstream mouths of the slough including all waters of the Old Kuskokuak Slough, the Kisaralik, Kasigluk, and the Kwethluk river drainages to their confluence with Kuskokuak Slough.
- The Tuluksak River drainage including its confluence with the Kuskokwim River and the Kuskokwim River mainstem downstream to the upstream side of Mishevik Slough.

Commercial Fishery

District 1

As directed by the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan, a commercial fishery may occur in late June or early July if salmon abundance is adequate to meet escapement goals and provide for subsistence opportunity. Processing capacity will limit commercial openings in District 1 to alternating subdistrict openings. Commercial openings may be announced when no large scale buyers are available to provide opportunity for permit holders operating as catcher/sellers or catcher/processors. For more information about the catcher/sellers or catcher/processor programs, contact the ADF&G office in Bethel.

All commercial fishing periods will be limited to gillnets with 6-inch or smaller mesh size. There is the potential for opening the Lower Section of Subdistrict 1B for two additional hours during a commercial opening, dependent on salmon abundance and processor capacity.

There has not been a directed commercial fishery for Chinook salmon since 1987 and this will continue in 2011. ADF&G will delay commercial fishing until Bethel Test Fish (BTF) catch per unit effort (CPUE) data supports that Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon escapement goals are likely to be met and subsistence opportunity is provided for, or until historical run timing through District 1 indicates that additional harvest of Chinook salmon would not have a significant impact on escapement or subsistence opportunity. Commercial processors have verbally agreed not to buy Chinook salmon harvested in the commercial fishery, so any Chinook salmon caught must be retained for subsistence use. A commercial fishery directed at coho salmon is anticipated in late July and August given adequate abundance indices.

Inseason Assessment

ADF&G and the USFWS will monitor and evaluate BTF and escapement projects daily to assess run strength and run timing. Relaxing, maintaining, or increasing restrictions beyond management actions already taken will be considered based on the performance of the Chinook salmon run, using the following criteria:

Assessment Date: June 11

This assessment date is based on the average cumulative CPUE at BTF. On June 11, approximately 10% of the historical total Chinook salmon run has passed Bethel. If the CPUE is at or above the historical average, this is an indication that the run is developing well, and Kuskokwim River tributary escapement goals may be met. If the cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE is less than the historical average for years in which escapement was met, we will consider taking further action, such as implementing the subsistence fishing schedule on the Kuskokwim River mainstem within District 1.

Assessment Date: June 22

This assessment date is also based on the average cumulative CPUE at BTF. On June 22, approximately 50% of the historical total Chinook salmon run has passed Bethel. If the CPUE is greater than the historical average, this is an indication that the run is developing well, and escapement goals may be met and restrictions may be relaxed. If the cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE is less than the historical average for years in which escapement was met, we will consider taking further restrictive action, such as implementing the subsistence fishing schedule on the Kuskokwim River mainstem within District 1.

Assessment Date: July 1

This assessment date is based on the passage of Chinook salmon at the Kwethluk River weir. On July 1, approximately 10% of the historical total Chinook salmon escapement has passed the weirs. If escapement projections indicate that the Kwethluk River escapement goal will be achieved, management actions could potentially be relaxed in the Kuskokuak Slough, Kwethluk, Kisaralik and Kasigluk Rivers.

The Tuluksak River drainage is unlikely to have the restrictions relaxed unless the escapement goal for that tributary is achieved.

2011 KUSKOKWIM BAY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Subsistence Fishery

Subsistence fishing will be open 7 days per week before the commercial fishing season. Subsistence fishery closures 16 hours before, during, and 4 hours after each commercial fishing period, **will be superseded by Emergency Order** once the commercial fishing season begins, and reduced to, 8 hours before, during, and 4 hours after each commercial fishing period. ADF&G staff will stay in contact with Kuskokwim Bay area subsistence fishermen throughout the season to determine if reasonable subsistence harvest opportunity is being provided.

Commercial Fishery

District 4

The commercial fishery will be managed in accordance with the District 4 Salmon Management Plan **5 ACC 07.367**. If Chinook salmon abundance is adequate and subsistence opportunity is provided for, by regulation, the commercial fishery is to open prior to June 16. Commercial fishing periods will be established by Emergency Order, and ADF&G shall allow at least one commercial fishing period per week unless there is a severe conservation concern. Chinook salmon returns to the Kanektok River are expected to be below average again this season and ADF&G expects to manage this fishery conservatively to start the season. Once sockeye salmon harvest exceeds Chinook salmon harvest, ADF&G will manage the commercial fishery based on the abundance of sockeye salmon. A commercial fishery directed at coho salmon is anticipated in late July and August given adequate abundance.

District 5

Commercial fishing periods will be established by Emergency Order, and it is anticipated that ADF&G will allow for a minimum of one 12 hour period per week with additional weekly periods if there is a harvestable surplus of salmon available. If Chinook salmon abundance is adequate, and opportunity to meet subsistence needs is provided, the first commercial period could be announced the last week of June. Once sockeye salmon harvest exceeds Chinook salmon harvest, ADF&G will manage the commercial fishery based on the abundance of sockeye salmon. A commercial fishery directed at coho salmon is anticipated in late July and August given adequate abundance.

Inseason Assessment

Inseason indicators of salmon run strength include verbal subsistence catch reports, weir escapement projects, aerial surveys, and commercial catch statistics. Weirs are anticipated to be operated on the Kanektok and Middle Fork Goodnews rivers to monitor salmon escapement and collect biological information.

Further announcements will be made from the Bethel ADF&G office and through local radio stations. News releases will be faxed to area villages and local fish processing companies.

For additional information concerning this news release:

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USFWS: Gene Peltola in Bethel 907-543-3151

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